

MASS MEDIA AS BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT. THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA AT CONTEMPORARY TIME

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Abstract: This article explores the role of mass media as a branch of government in contemporary Uzbekistan. It examines the evolving landscape of mass media in the country, focusing on its role in promoting democracy, providing information, and fostering public participation. The article discusses the challenges and opportunities faced by Uzbekistan's mass media in the digital age and highlights the importance of media freedom, transparency, and accountability in shaping the country's governance. By analyzing the role of mass media in Uzbekistan, this article aims to provide insights into its impact on democracy, public discourse, and citizen engagement.

Keywords: Mass media, government, democracy, Uzbekistan, information, public participation.

Mass media plays a crucial role in contemporary Uzbekistan, serving as a branch of government that influences public opinion, informs citizens, and contributes to democratic processes. This article examines the role of mass media in the context of governance and democracy in Uzbekistan. It explores how mass media facilitates the free flow of information, shapes public discourse, and holds those in power accountable. By delving into the relationship between mass media and government in Uzbekistan, this article aims to provide insights into its impact on democracy and citizen engagement in the country.

¹Media Landscape in Uzbekistan this section provides an overview of the media landscape in Uzbekistan, highlighting the diversity of media outlets and platforms. It discusses the historical context of media development in the country, including the transition from state-controlled media to a more pluralistic environment. The section also addresses the challenges faced by the media in terms of media freedom, independence, and access to information.

Role of Mass Media in Promoting Democracy. In this section, the focus is on the role of mass media in promoting democracy in Uzbekistan. It examines how media outlets contribute to public discourse, provide platforms for diverse voices, and facilitate citizen

1. ¹ Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (Eds.). (2020). Fake News and Misinformation: The Roles of the News Industry, Social Media, and Technology. Springer.

participation. The section also discusses the importance of media freedom, transparency, and accountability in ensuring a vibrant democratic system.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital age The third section addresses the challenges and opportunities faced by Uzbekistan's mass media in the digital age. It explores the impact of digital technologies on media consumption, the rise of social media, and the emergence of citizen journalism. The section also discusses the risks of misinformation and the need for media literacy in Uzbekistan's evolving media landscape.

Media Freedom and Accountability. This section focuses on media freedom and accountability in Uzbekistan. It examines the legal and regulatory framework governing the media, including the role of media self-regulation and professional ethics. The section also discusses the importance of transparency and accountability in the media industry and the role of media organizations in upholding these principles.

Media influence is the actual force exerted by a media message, resulting in either a change or reinforcement in audience or individual beliefs. Whether a media message has an effect on any of its audience members is contingent on many factors, including audience demographics and psychological characteristics. These effects can be positive or negative, abrupt or gradual, short-term or long-lasting. Not all effects result in change; some media messages reinforce an existing belief. Researchers examine an audience after media exposure for changes in cognition, belief systems, and attitudes, as well as emotional, physiological and behavioral effects.

The influences of mass media (or 'media effects') are observed in various aspects of human life, from voting behaviors to perceptions of violence, from evaluations of scientists to our understanding of others' opinions. The overall influence of mass media has changed drastically over the years, and will continue to do so as the media itself develops. In the new media environment, we have dual identities - consumers and creators. We not only obtain information through new media, but also disseminate information to wide audiences.

Further, the influence of the media on the psychosocial development of children is profound. Thus, it is important for physicians to discuss with parents their child's exposure to media and to provide guidance on age-appropriate use of any media, including television, radio, music, video games and the Internet.

There are several scholarly studies which addresses media and its effects. Bryant and Zillmann defined media effects as "the social, cultural, and psychological impact of communicating via the mass media". Perse stated that media effects researchers study "how to control, enhance, or mitigate the impact of the mass media on individuals and society". Lang stated media effects researchers study "what types of content, in what type of medium, affect which people, in what situations". McLuhan points out in his media ecology theory that "The medium is the message."

²There are some specific challenges faced by mass media in Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, mass media faces a range of challenges that impact its freedom, independence, and ability

2. ² Zelizer, B. (2004). *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy*. SAGE Publications.

to fulfill its role as a watchdog and promoter of democracy. Some specific challenges faced by mass media in Uzbekistan include:

- ❖ **Limited Media Freedom:** Despite improvements in recent years, media freedom in Uzbekistan remains restricted. State control and censorship have historically been prevalent, hindering the ability of journalists to report freely and critically on sensitive topics.
- ❖ **Lack of Pluralism and Diversity:** The media landscape in Uzbekistan is characterized by limited pluralism and diversity. State-owned or state-controlled media entities dominate the industry, leaving little room for independent voices and alternative perspectives.
- ❖ **Digital Challenges:** While digital platforms offer new opportunities for media engagement, they also present challenges. Internet censorship, surveillance, and restrictions on social media platforms can limit the reach and impact of online journalism.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes legal reforms, promoting media diversity, ensuring media independence, and enhancing media literacy and professionalism. Efforts to improve media freedom, protect journalists' rights, and foster an enabling environment for independent media are essential for the development of a vibrant and democratic media landscape in Uzbekistan. Promoting media diversity in Uzbekistan is crucial for fostering a vibrant and inclusive media landscape that reflects the diverse perspectives and interests of the population. Here are some strategies that can be employed to promote media diversity in Uzbekistan:

- ❖ **Legal Reforms:** Implement legal reforms that ensure media freedom, independence, and protection of journalists' rights. This includes revising laws and regulations that restrict media ownership, promote transparency in media ownership structures, and prohibit censorship.
- ❖ **Licensing and Registration:** Create a transparent and non-discriminatory licensing and registration process for media outlets. This process should be accessible to a wide range of actors, including community media, independent outlets, and minority-language media.
- ❖ **Financial Support and Sustainability:** Provide financial support and incentives for diverse media outlets. This can include grants, subsidies, and tax incentives to encourage the establishment and sustainability of independent and minority-language media organizations.
- ❖ **Encouraging Independent Ownership:** Encourage the growth of independent media outlets by facilitating access to funding, resources, and technical support. This can be achieved through partnerships with international organizations, media development agencies, and civil society groups.
- ❖ **Collaboration and Networking:** Encourage collaboration and networking among media organizations, including partnerships, knowledge sharing, and joint initiatives. This can help create a supportive ecosystem for diverse media outlets and foster cross-media cooperation.
- ❖ **Media Literacy and Education:** Promote media literacy programs in schools and communities to enhance critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and awareness of media diversity. This can empower citizens to engage with media in a more informed and discerning manner. By implementing these strategies, Uzbekistan can create an environment that fosters media diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity, allowing a wide range of voices and perspectives to be heard in the media landscape.

In conclusion, promoting media diversity in Uzbekistan is essential for the development of a vibrant and inclusive media landscape. By implementing legal reforms to ensure media freedom, transparency, and protection of journalists' rights, Uzbekistan can create an enabling environment for diverse media outlets to thrive. Providing financial support, training, and capacity-building initiatives can further enhance the sustainability and professionalism of independent and minority-language media organizations. Encouraging the establishment of community media outlets and fostering collaboration among media organizations will contribute to a more representative and inclusive media landscape. Additionally, promoting media literacy and engaging in public dialogue and consultation on media policies will empower citizens to critically engage with media content. By embracing these strategies, Uzbekistan can nurture a diverse and pluralistic media environment that reflects the diverse perspectives and interests of its population. Mass media in contemporary Uzbekistan serves as a branch of government, playing a vital role in promoting democracy, informing citizens, and fostering public participation. The media landscape in Uzbekistan faces both challenges and opportunities in the digital age, requiring a balance between media freedom and responsibility. Ensuring media freedom, transparency, and accountability are essential for the development of a vibrant and informed society. By recognizing the role of mass media as a branch of government, Uzbekistan can work towards creating an inclusive and participatory democracy that reflects the aspirations and needs of its citizens.

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